

ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF EDUCATION

In previous articles I have incidentally noticed some of the economic aspects of education; but now I wish more formally to consider the relation of education to the power of the individual to make a living, and to the prosperity of the country.

We must first notice that a leading feature of school life is its influence on the character of the students apart from the influence of the studies pursued. School life has always had an enormous influence on the habits of life of students. This influence is not diminishing. We have late reports that the Greek letter societies in the preparatory schools are being abolished because of their pernicious influence on the students. It is said that these societies are made a "fetish" implying that they are made the medium of a sort of worship in the colleges, and Greek letters and other societies are being abolished because of their pernicious influence on the students. It is said that these societies are made a "fetish" implying that they are made the medium of a sort of worship in the colleges, and Greek letters and other societies are being abolished because of their pernicious influence on the students.

Other customs of students, mostly pernicious, such as dress rivalries manifested in the night called "rushes," are made matters of the highest import. Many infractions of discipline are made satisfactory on the students by such customs.

Hazing is an illustration of these customs, handed down from class to class, and which seem beyond the power of the authorities to abolish.

The latest fad in the schools is athletics. Far more is now heard of college teams than of college brains. In fact, everything else than study and classroom exercises seem to attract the attention of students and even of their parents and the public generally.

All these things are manifestations of influences on the character and habits of students, aside from what is usually considered as education. Together with the effects of the regular education of the schools the ideas and habits of life of students are very soon profoundly modified.

This creates a certain standard of living, which lasts the student throughout life and, as all economists agree, is the economic basis of all the efforts in making a living and getting along in the world.

It does not need argument that the standard of living acquired while in school is that of the prosperous classes. This standard cannot be maintained in life by manual labor, even if such labor were not precluded by the very complex of habits involved in this very standard of living or of comfort.

Furthermore, the standard of living acquired in the schools is maintained by the individual without further resources, except for those of the highest ability or intellectual fecundity.

"Intellectual proletarians" of our so-called "middle class" are composed of these products of the schools, that is, of getting along in the world is concerned, might be more aptly called "educated fools." This "intellectual proletariat" is rapidly becoming a political as well as an economic menace to society.

By the all-powerful habit of "brain power" in school these men are precluded from manual labor, and being without real brain power, are economic deviants, useless to themselves and dangerous to all others.

Most economists foolishly make "labor" the most powerful factor in the production of the means of livelihood, but it is, in fact, intellectual force or brain power is a powerful factor in production, the requirements of production would be met by far fewer intellectual directors than of manual laborers. And even if the schools supplied brain power, and turned out a majority of students of intellectual force, the supply might easily exceed the demand, and so damage the machinery of production.

That the schools do not turn out men fitted for the economic work of production is, in spite of "who's who," plainly evident. None of the original capitalists of industry, Carnegie, Rockefeller, and the rest, were college men. And it is always considered a wonder if an educated son of a millionaire is able to keep his property intact.

The fact is that the whole tendency of the school education is to direct graduates into the professions of law, ministry or medicine, and modern economies are at serious trouble to prove that these are not "non-producers," as taught by some of the egg economists. But even if professional men are useful to society, too great a supply is not beneficial, and a supply of incompetents is positively harmful, especially so to the individual for which he is utilized, and for which the world has no place. The fact that the

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statistics of successful men, mostly professional men, now show that a majority have been in the colleges, is not conclusive of their economic influence. By the prevailing fad, most men of force try to "go through college"; and that they become successful does not prove that they acquired their brain power in college. Most of them would have been successful without extended education.

If the statistics of the successful included also an enumeration of the unsuccessful graduates, composing the "intellectual proletariat," the logical deduction would be quite different, as any one who pursues the recurring reports of his class in college, containing the histories of his classmates, is most painfully aware. Considering that the majority of students in most colleges are sons of the well-to-do, it is a real wonder how many failures are disclosed in the "class reports." The absolute derelicts, those who stray away, lost to the watchful class secretary, are very many even from colleges boasting of their famous alumni.

That the college does not and cannot train men to make their living by labor or directly productive effort is conclusively shown by the pampered agricultural colleges, which turn out very few farmers, more who work the farmers, but mostly teachers and professional men, like the rest of the schools.

Even the humble students of Hampton and Tuskegee, if we may trust the reports of the successful ones, turn out to be teachers of manual training, doctors, lawyers and clergymen, rather than farmers, blacksmiths and bricklayers.

Men of the south have always been fearful. They put up a great fight on very little general education. They have done wonders since the Civil War by positive native force. They have succeeded at home and in the cities of the North with mighty little school learning. Now our Southern youth are being forced, by a foolish public craze, into the colleges, and it is certainly a great pity. Our still poorer country people are being wrung for private and public expenditures for an education which will be peculiarly disadvantageous in our situation. Down here we are not particularly in need of doctors, lawyers, ministers, or even "counter-jumpers" and bookkeepers. We want men of native force to develop our resources, compel the fields to give up crops, the earth minerals, and industry germinations.

Considering our numbers, we are now doing this with fair success. Our borrowed fad in "Yankee not" will waste the State's money, the money of fond parents, and disperse energy which we cannot afford to exchange for any sort of educational fetish.

W. ALDRICH.

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